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Jack Shaw

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Birthday Thoughts,

—OR—

Reflections from the Mirror of Life.

BY JACOB SHAW.

Birthday Thoughts,

—OR—

Reflections from the Mirror of Life.

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Around that orb with life and light imbued,
Enlivening all which else were solitude,
Three score and five times Earth its course had made,
Vestured successively in light and shade,
Since, (while anticipations bright prevailed,)
A fragile form its infant breath inhaled,
Who, (when by spirit stirring hope impell'd,)
Mirror'd in prospect happiness beheld,
Saw myriad worlds, throughout the vast expanse,
Roll and revolve and in the distance dance.
Each tree, each herb, each flower its charms display'd,
And Pleasure danced and winning gestures made,
And Beauty smiled, its dimpled, lovely face.
Its parting lips all comeliness and grace,
Its brilliant eyes of glorious azure hue,
Outvied th' effulgence of th' ethereal blue,
Its sylph like form, in garments chaste and white,
Seem'd pure perfection to the enchanted sight.
All, all at once, in concert seem'd to say,
"Enjoy, enjoy, why trifle time away."
Each in its turn, is carefully surveyed,
And to be happy ardently essayed.
But Disappointment of the darkest shade,
In scowling blackness show'd its hydra head,
Fastened its fangs in the desparing soul,
And said: "Though canst not reach the expected goal.

Constant enjoyment thou canst not attain,
For short, and transient, too, is pleasures reign."
Reason inquired, "Can this indeed be so?"
Experience said, "If thou the truth would'st know,
Inquire of me, not fancies on the wing,
From wants thou'lt learn that all enjoymnts spring,
Pain is the soil from which thy pleasures grow,
Propensities the fountain whence they flow,
And in proportion as the want's intense,
Will be the pleasure as its consequence,
When by satiety the want expires,
The pleasure dies or from the mind retires,
Till other wants by other means begot,
Produce new pleasures which continue not,
But like their predecessors live and die,
When with the like conditions they comply,
'Twill bring no pleasure to thy latent mind,
Possessing what thou'st no desire to find,
The gold of ophir placed before thine eyes,
Would find no eager hands to grasp the prize,
And when *contentment* stupefies thy *mind*,
No feast of joy or pleasure wilt thou find,
But like a statue fallen from its base.
Wilt care not who may view thy vapid face,
Thy form examine or thy limbs inspect,
Who treats thee kindly or with rude neglect.
Now learn *this* truth, unchangeable as fate,
OPPOSING FORCES *all* EFFECTS CREATE;
Learn it of matter and of every kind,
Its force attractive *indicates* its mind,
Its force *repulsive* to the same *attests*,
And doubly proves its *mind* and its behests,
Learn it of plants of low and high degree,
The puny fungus or the towering tree,
From the same soil EACH PROPER food selects,
And what's improper *certainly* rejects.
As an EPITOME of *all thy race*,
Learn of thyself thy *motives*, *state* and *place*,
That through thy frame opposing forces act,
As powers impel, or counter powers attract;
The limbs obedient to each impulse given,
Urge or resist by varying forces driven.

The purple tide propell'd to every part,
Returns, betimes, to vivify the heart,
Gives life sustaining power throughout its course.
From its extreeme to its producing source;
Excites to action; lofty thoughts inspires,
Kindles the flames, and urges on the fires;
Ambition raises; wondrous is its flight;
It SOARS FOR FAME, up to a dazzling HEIGHT;
It reaches far, it spreads its banners wide;
Imagines earth too small to glut its pride;
Believes all matter is its lawful prize,
All beings rightful plunder, in its eyes,
Invokes the powers of heaven, earth and hell,
To raise its FAME, and its renown to SWELL;
Annihilates all obstacles, it can o'ercome,
E'en to the cottage shed of virtue's home.
Murder and Treason are its chosen friends;
Perdue, the *means* are *sanctioned* by the *ends.*
Successful villany entitles those
Who play its cards to honor from its foes;
Its dazzling splendor raises such a cloud,
It dims their vision and ensnares the crowd,
Elicits hallelujahs from their tongues,
And boisterous homage from obsequious lungs.
Its votaries raised by chance or accidents,
They put on airs—of wisdom, make pretence.
Talk of improvement, of PERFECTION treat,
Claim if IT's gain'd the work will be complete;
Thence peace will reign, and happiness and joy
Pervade all beings, grief and pain destroy.
Delighted with the prospects which arise,
They overlook *this* TRUTH which underlies,
That when PERFECTION shall to ALL extend,
CHANGE from thenceforth must have a FINAL END.
For, to the TENURE of a PERFECT state,
No power *can* add, nor from it *can abate!*
Pleasure and pain and hope will be destroyed;
Vacant become the boundless endless void.
Matter and mind will in a grave be laid
Intangible as space, and less than shadows shade,
Annihilation and Perfection will be wed,
And SLEEP an ENDLESS sleep in NIHIL's bed!"

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